

# Lights and Shadows

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## 6 a.m./I-10

Matt Mallard

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6 a.m./I-10

Matt Mallard

6 hours on the road with  
6 more to go.  
The drive  
stretches forever  
as if the road might crumble  
into the sea,  
the January salt-waves  
lapping up the pavement  
as it sinks into the sand.  
The sun finally decides  
to start its day,  
at first,  
only as a sliver  
of electric blue between  
navy clouds, a thin slice  
of the sky revealed by  
God  
and a giant silver letter opener.

As our two best friends  
snooze in the back seat,  
she attempts to keep me awake  
when our song plays.

*There now, steady love,  
So few come and won't go.  
Will you, won't you  
be the one I'll always know?  
When I'm losing my control,  
the city spins around.*

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*You're the only one who knows.  
You slow it down.*

“Do you still think of me  
when you hear this song?”  
Stealing a sideways glance,  
I say, “I always did.”

We both turn our heads  
toward the road  
as the sun breaks through  
the bottom of the clouds.  
The road descends, and at the end,  
between the row of Southern pines  
that line both sides of the interstate,  
the sky glows  
pale gold and coral,  
pigments Raphael used  
to paint his heavenly cherubs.  
We stare at the morning,  
admiring the beauty of the sunrise  
(and Isaac's song),  
refusing to dare utter a syllable  
until he's finished his oath.

*Oh, oh, be my baby.  
I'll look after you.*

I neglect the urge  
to reach for her hand,  
almost laughing,  
remembering  
the reason we broke  
up in October.

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